

God Honors all Covenantal Relationships – *Why Not the Church?*

An Open Letter to the United Methodist Church from members of the New York Annual Conference

Marriage is an important covenantal relationship recognized and supported by the church, but in its doctrine and policies the United Methodist Church wrongly excludes lesbian and gay people from this recognition and support.

Wherever people come together to grow as people of faith, God gives recognition and support. What matters to God is not who comes together, but why. The Gospel proclaims an unrelenting message of welcome in God's kingdom for the unexpected, the outcast, the marginalized. And yet the United Methodist Church denies gay and lesbian people the right to marry in God's name. The Church must aspire to God's extravagant welcome.

In 2007, the New York Annual Conference adopted a resolution to support the call for same-sex marriage. The Book of Discipline, the sum total of United Methodist policies, states "Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for homosexual persons" (162H) and "... sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We believe persons may be fully human only when that gift is acknowledged and affirmed by themselves, the church, and society" (161G), yet gay and lesbian members cannot be married in our churches or by our ministers. This inequality is wrong, unjust, ungodly and unacceptable. Therefore:

We call on our Bishop and all Bishops to speak in bold prophetic voices of the expanse of God's welcome and to refuse to tolerate discrimination in their conferences.

We call on our General Conference delegates and all General Conference delegates to actively advocate and work for the adoption of legislation that overturns church policies that compel inequality in marriage rights.

We call on our clergy to put aside societal prejudice and boldly manifest God's welcome for their gay and lesbian congregants, as they do all congregants; and to lead their congregations into recognition that we are each complicit in the church's discrimination whenever we are not actively engaged in dismantling it.

We call on members of the New York Annual Conference and all United Methodists to refuse to accept a segregated Church; to find faithful ways to withdraw their complicity in the church's unequal treatment of its gay and straight members; and to work tirelessly to bring about that day when the church finally reflects God's radical inclusivity.

Jesus acted with bravery and faith, even in moments of great turmoil. **We call on each other** to sustain our faith and pray for God's grace and love to embolden us as we work to make our church a church for all God's people.

This letter is an initiative of Methodists in New Directions (MIND), signed by 570 members of the, New York Annual Conference, attached. Please share it with others as part of your inclusive ministry. For more information about MIND, write to DrBenz3@verizon.net.

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John Hardy, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
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David Nelson, Golden Hill UMC, Bridgeport, CT
Kevin Nelson, Park Avenue UMC, New York, NY
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Judy O'Brien, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY

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Rev. Kenneth W. Prill, Center Moriches UMC, Center Moriches, NY
Rudy Prudente, Asbury-Crestwood, Yonkers, NY
Carl V. Puleo, First and Summerfield UMC, New Haven, CT
Joyce Pyle, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Bob Quinn, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Rev. Jason Radmacher, John Street UMC, New York, NY
John T. Randolph II, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Rev. A. Erik Rasmussen, Bellport UMC, Bellport, NY
Esther Ready, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Emily Regas, Church of the Village, New York, NY
Mary Ruth Reitz, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Karen Reynolds, Saugerties UMC, Saugerties, NY
Barbara Rhodes, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Nancy L. Rice, Memorial UMC, White Plains, NY
Milagros Ricourt, Church of the Village, New York, NY
Sally Ridgeway, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Joyce Riley, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY

James Ring, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Wally Robinson, Stony Brook Community Church, Stony Brook, NY
Jessica M. Rodriguez, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Marcos Rodriguez-Quijano, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Cynthia A. Roney, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
George I. Rose, Sr., First and Summerfield UMC, New Haven, CT
Jeff Roth, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Cynthia Round, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Lance Ruiz Carlile, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Luisamaria Ruiz Carlile, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Ann Rutt, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Marion Sachdeva, First and Summerfield UMC, New Haven, CT
Rev. Agnes Campbell Saffoury, Sloatsburg UMC, Sloatsburg, NY
Tim Sanford, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Katie Sanjeck, Church of the Village, New York, NY
Rev. J. Manny Santiago, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Rodney Sapini, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Stacey Sarnicola, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Bob Sauchelli, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Ann Schagel, Bay Ridge UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Rev. Walter H. Schenck, Retired Elder
Darien Schnaithman, Memorial UMC, White Plains, NY
Paul Schneller, Valhalla UMC, Valhalla, NY
Rev. Brian Schofield-Bodt, Mary Taylor Memorial UMC, Milford, CT
Wayne Schwartz, Golden Hill UMC, Bridgeport, CT
Carol Scott, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Deborah Holston Selden, First and Summerfield UMC, New Haven, CT
Edwin vanDeusen Selden, First and Summerfield UMC, New Haven, CT
Barbara Sette, Asbury-Crestwood, Yonkers, NY
Amy Sheets, Church of the Village, New York, NY
Latoya D. Sherron, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Sara Silver, Memorial UMC, Yorktown Heights, NY
Jaqueline Skiles, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Lindsey Smith, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Marilyn K. Smith, Sea Cliff UMC, Sea Cliff, NY
Rev. Tom Smoot, St. Paul's UMC, Northport, NY
Marylee Smyth, Sea Cliff UMC, Sea Cliff, NY
Leslie Soha, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Michael Soha, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Julie Songer, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Amy Alison Stack, Sea Cliff UMC, Sea Cliff, NY
Christina H. Stack, Sea Cliff UMC, Sea Cliff, NY
Edward W. Stack, Sea Cliff UMC, Sea Cliff, NY
Kimberly Anne Stack, Sea Cliff UMC, Sea Cliff, NY
Suzanne Gail Stack, Sea Cliff UMC, Sea Cliff, NY
Ralph Stalter, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Rick Stazesky, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Sonny Stephens, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Bob Stevenson, Golden Hill UMC, Bridgeport, CT

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Ginny Stevenson, Golden Hill UMC, Bridgeport, CT
Matthew Stoops, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Rev. Louise Stowe-John, First UMC, Amityville, NY
Claire A. Strand, Cheshire UMC, Cheshire, CT
Sandi Stratton-Gonzalez, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Rev. Charles H. Straut, Kings Highway UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Bonnie Stretch, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Lauren E. Strickland, Westport UMC, Westport, CT
Rev. Donald E. Struchen, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Doris Strugatz, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Linda Stubbs, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Michael F. Suing, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Rev. Mary Ellen Summerville, Asbury-Crestwood, Yonkers, NY
Rev. Scott Summerville, Asbury-Crestwood, Yonkers, NY
Elise Teichert, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Cathlene Terbetski, Memorial UMC, White Plains, NY
Larry Thomas, Church of the Village, New York, NY
Mary Thombs, Asbury-Crestwood, Yonkers, NY
Linda Thompson, First UMC, Amityville, NY
Jo Goodson Tiedeman, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
John Tiedeman, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Kathryn Tinghitella, First and Summerfield UMC, New Haven, CT
Dr. J. Terry Todd, Church of the Village, New York, NY
Greg Todd, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Kristin Tolliver, Valhalla UMC, Valhalla, NY
Rev. Ronald D. Tompkins, Community UMC, Jackson Heights, NY
Inez Torres-Quiles, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Maria Torres-Quiles, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Gary Trahan, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Adeline Tucker, First and Summerfield UMC, New Haven, CT
Marian Tuffin, Bay Ridge UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Julia Tulloch, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Rev. Ken Tulloch, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Rev. Sara Thompson Tweedy,
Federated Church of Kerhonkson, Kerhonkson, NY
Marilyn Van Tine, Valhalla UMC, Valhalla, NY
Mana Velez, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Joseph Villano, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Patricia P. Wager, New Paltz UMC, New Paltz, NY
Ryan Wager, New Paltz UMC, New Paltz, NY
Ronald A. Wager, Sr., New Paltz UMC, New Paltz, NY
Sylvia Wagner, Sea Cliff UMC, Sea Cliff, NY
Marilyn Wakefield, Reservoir UMC, Shokan, NY
Jane Wakeman, Golden Hill UMC, Bridgeport, CT
Jerome Walker, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Marcia Ward, First and Summerfield UMC, New Haven, CT
Rev. W. Joel Warner, Jr., Port Jefferson UMC, Port Jefferson, NY
Doc Watson, North Shore UMC, Wading River, NY
Lisa Watson, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY

David Webb, Church of the Village, New York, NY
Rev. Jeff Wells, Community UMC, Massapequa, NY
Ruth Wesserling, Plutarch UMC, New Paltz, NY
Rev. Dr. Traci West, Drew University
Brent Westrop, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Dawn Wheatley, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Barbara Wheeler, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Welker White, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Zan White, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Rev. Dr. Robert Whitfield, Mary Taylor Memorial UMC, Milford, CT
Rev. Ruth Dunn Widmann, Bayport UMC, Bayport, BY
Karl J. Wiemer, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Nancy Wilks, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Lindsey Williams, Plutarch UMC, New Paltz, NY
Carol A. Wilson, Cheshire UMC, Cheshire, CT
Orita Wilson, Asbury-Crestwood, Yonkers, NY
John Winkel, Memorial UMC, White Plains, NY
Karen Winkel, Memorial UMC, White Plains, NY
Marcia Winter, Mary Taylor Memorial UMC, Milford, CT
Elaine Winward, Jesse Lee Memorial UMC, Ridgefield, CT
Michael J. Witsch, Memorial UMC, White Plains, NY
Julie Wityk, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY
Laura Wolf-Powers, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Anne Wong, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Rev. Hyoungdock Yoo, East Berlin UMC, East Berlin, NY
Damian Young, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Jacquelyn Young, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Nancy E. Young, Park Slope UMC, Brooklyn, NY
Christa Zaldiva, Asbury-Crestwood, Yonkers, NY
Rita Zearfoss, Asbury-Crestwood, Yonkers, NY
J.M. Zeigler, St. Paul and St. Andrew, New York, NY

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